



PSEPHOTUS HEMATONOTUS.

PSEPHOTUS HÆMATONOTUS, *Gould.*

Red-backed Parrakeet.

Platycercus hæmatonotus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 151; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS species inhabits the interior of the south-eastern division of the Australian continent; it is abundantly dispersed over the Liverpool Plains, and all the open country to the northward as far as it has yet been explored; it also inhabits similar tracts of country in South Australia; on the plains around Adelaide it is seldom seen, but as the traveller advances towards the interior every succeeding mile brings him in contact with it in greater numbers. It is more frequently seen on the ground than among the trees; and it evidently gives a decided preference to open grassy valleys and the naked crowns of hills, than to the wide and almost boundless plain. During winter it associates in flocks, varying from twenty to a hundred in number, which trip nimbly over the ground in search of the seeds of grasses and other plants, with which the crops of many that were shot were found to be distended. In the early morning, and not unfrequently in other parts of the day, I have often seen hundreds perched together on some leafless limb of a *Eucalyptus*, sitting in close order along the whole length of the branch, until hunger prompted them to descend to the feeding-ground, or the approach of a hawk or other enemy caused them to disperse. Their movements on the ground are characterized by much grace and activity, and although assembled in one great mass running over the ground like Plovers, they are generally mated in pairs,—a fact easily ascertained by the difference in the colouring of the sexes; the rich red mark on the rump of the male appearing, as the bright sun shines upon it, like a spot of fire.

In the manner of its flocking and the situations it frequents, this bird is directly intermediate between the members of the genera *Euphema* and *Platycercus*; the same remark holds good also with respect to its form and structure; this fact, however, I have pointed out in the observations on the genus, and it is therefore unnecessary to repeat the details here.

This bird has a pleasing whistling note, almost approaching to a song, which is poured forth both while perching on the branches of the trees and while flying over the plains. On the approach of the breeding-season it retires into the forest and separates into pairs; the eggs, which are white and five or six in number, eleven lines long by eight and a half lines broad, are deposited without any nest in the spouts and hollows of the gum-trees.

Crown of the head, back of the neck, cheeks and chest emerald-green, which is lightest on the forehead and cheeks; back brownish green; rump scarlet; tip and under surface of the shoulder, spurious wing, and the outer edge of the basal half of the primaries rich ultramarine blue; the blue of the shoulder above passing into sulphur-yellow, and forming a conspicuous spot of the latter colour in the centre of the shoulder; greater and lesser wing-coverts and secondaries bluish green; upper tail-coverts and two centre tail-feathers green, passing into blue towards the tip, which is blackish brown; the remainder of the tail-feathers green at the base, gradually passing into delicate greyish white on the inner webs and the tips; centre of the abdomen yellow; thighs dull bluish green; under tail-coverts greyish white; bill horn-colour; feet brown; irides pale brown.

The young male of the year differs from the adult in having those parts delicate greenish grey which in the latter are emerald-green; in being destitute of the red colouring of the rump, and of the yellow on the centre of the abdomen; and in having the bases of the secondaries and some of the primaries white.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size.